

April 12, 2010

Jim Regnier, Presiding Officer, Districting and Apportionment Commission
and Members: Linda Vaughney, Joe Lamson, Pat Smith , and Jon Bennion

Dear Districting and Apportionment Commission:

Thank you for the opportunity to share my recommendations with you for the Redistricting Criteria. I am currently a State Senator for one of the three Indian Majority Senate Districts that was developed by the last Districting and Apportionment Commission and am proud to represent Senate District 8 in this role.

Many of us have worked long and hard to create the opportunity for equitable representation of the American Indian population in the state of Montana in the State Legislature. The three Indian majority Senate Districts and the six Indian majority House Districts that were developed by the last Commission has accomplished this! I urge you to stay with this plan to ensure the six Indian majority House Districts and 3 Indian majority Senate Districts continue. American Indians make up 6% of the state population and they now make up 6% of the State Legislature (9 out of 150).

It is important to insure that the Voting Rights Act is a major part of the mandatory criteria for all districts. We have come too far to take any steps backwards. We must insure that the American Indian population retains the opportunity to participate in the political process and elect representatives of our choice.

I understand that there has been testimony that indicated there is no community of interest between the Blackfeet and the Salish-Kootenai and who opposed this district. I very much disagree with this position. I was a plaintiff in the Old Person v. Brown (previously Cooney) case that supported the creation of this Senate District to comply with Section 2 of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. It would be important for the Commission to be familiar with this case.

There are many common connections between the Blackfeet and Flathead Reservation that are part of Senate District 8. In fact, there was just a meeting held between the leadership of these two tribal nations this month to look at common goals. Let me share some of the community of interest issues:

1. There has been a long history of the sharing of the resources of what is now called Glacier National Park by both the Blackfeet and Confederated Salish and Kootenai people.
2. Tribal Colleges – both have tribal colleges that serve their communities and are connected by the federal programs that fund tribal colleges and especially by the students from both communities who attend college. I know there are many students from the Blackfeet Reservation who attend college at Salish Kootenai College.
3. The issues facing the students in K-12 schools are similar. The majority of students on both these reservation communities attend public school and face many of the same challenges. Closing the Achievement gap for American Indian Students and increasing the high school completion

rate of American Indian students are common goals of the k-12 schools on both the Blackfeet and Flathead Reservations.

There are strong ties between the Blackfeet and Confederated Salish and Kootenai in the implementation of Indian Education for all in the schools on both reservations.

4. There is a strong political interest that links the Blackfeet and Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes both with the State and the Federal Governments. The economic and social issues of unemployment, inadequate health care, law and order issues, and housing are some of the common political issues that bring the tribes to both the State of Montana and to Washington, D. C. Prior to the current boundaries for SD 8, the Senate District that included the Blackfeet Reservation, extended to the communities east of the Blackfeet Reservation including Valier, Cut Bank, and Conrad. Other than being close to each other, there was really no community of interest between these communities, in fact the cultural and social relationships that bind communities were very much separate and still are in most situations.

Following are some very specific "community of interests" legislation that I have been involved in between both the Blackfeet and Confederated Salish and Kootenai communities:

- water rights legislation that I worked on with both the Blackfeet and Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes in 2007 and 2009. The compacts covered different water resources, but the efforts were very similar.
- efforts to support funding for the non-beneficiary students at tribal colleges. This has been an on-going effort at the state legislature and both the Blackfeet Community College and the Salish Kootenai College are strong advocates working with me as their Senator to help ensure funding for this.
- the place name changes with both the Blackfeet and Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. Both communities shared sites with the derogatory word "Squaw" that have now been changed to new place names identified by the tribal communities.

Please add to your Commission research documents the "Voting Rights in Indian Country" A Special Report of the Voting Rights of the American Civil Liberties Union, September 2009, if you have not already done so.

I thank you for your service to Montana.

Sincerely,

Carol Juneau
Browning, Montana.

Weiss, Rachel

From: Missoula Democrats [missoulademocrats@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, April 19, 2010 2:56 PM
To: Districting
Subject: Redistricting Criteria

Commissioners,

Thanks for your work redrawing Montana's legislative district map. I was unable to attend your meeting in Missoula because it was scheduled at the same time as a City Council meeting (an unfortunate coincidence for me nearly any Monday night, but especially inconvenient given the heavy public interest on April 12th that prevented many members of my organization from attending). I do, however, wish to submit some comments on the criteria for drawing districts.

We must be conscious of communities of interest during the redistricting this go around so that we don't eliminate, in particular, the gains made by Native American communities in being represented by members of their communities. Such regression would be viewed dimly under the Voting Rights Act and avoiding receivership under the Act should be a top priority of the Commission.

In light of this, I would advise sticking with the 5% population deviation threshold that has survived judicial scrutiny in the past. While the Commission can aim for lower deviations, setting a threshold lower than the federal allowance from the outset only hampers the Commission's flexibility to address Montana's physical and cultural geography as well as weakening the plan's ability to survive a court challenge, should the plan wind up being attacked in a lawsuit. There's no need to make decisions at the outset of redistricting that will throw the outcome into unnecessary jeopardy.

Finally, as a resident of an urban area, and a representative of diverse suburban and urban areas, I want to advise in particular for districts that continue to contain a blend of urban and suburban voters. The interests of residents in less-dense areas of cities need to be reconciled alongside those of more-dense areas of cities in order for the legislature to adequately address the well-being of Montana's economic engines and the people who make them run. In many cases in Missoula, the current map does this well and I would advise using it as a starting point for the next map.

Thanks again for your attention to this comment and your willingness to serve.

Regards,
J.

--

Jason Wiener
Chair, Missoula County Democrats
P.O. Box 9305
Missoula, MT 59807
missoulademocrats@gmail.com

Weiss, Rachel

From: Jeff Essmann [ess-tech@bresnan.net]
Sent: Tuesday, April 20, 2010 9:18 AM
To: Districting; redistricting@mt.gov
Subject: Dilution of Urban representation

Commission members,

I wish to offer a footnote to my comments at your hearing held last night in Billings on the criteria for your redistricting effort. While it may not have been the intent of the last commission to dilute the urban vote and urban representation, that was undoubtedly the outcome. Time and time again, whether in Missoula, Great Falls, Billings, Kalispell or Bozeman, significant numbers of urban voters were separated from others like themselves living inside city limits and attached to suburban voters within their own county or rural voters in other counties.

As Sharon Stewart-Peregoy and David Roundstone stated, it is important that people with common interests have the capacity to achieve a common voice. That is as true for city residents as it is for rural residents or reservation residents. Please apply a simple standard of fairness and do not dilute urban representation by attaching these city voters to suburban districts or rural districts unless there is no choice. With that type of standard, crossing the city limits to attach to non-city voters should happen only once per city instead of the multiple times it occurs under the current plan.

Again, I wish to thank you for giving the people of Montana the opportunity to express themselves with respect to the choices you will make in ranking the subjective criteria.

Jeff Essmann
Senate District 28



Crow Country

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Legislative Branch

Pryor:

Arrow Creek
Carlson Goes Ahead
Lawrence De Crane
Bryce Hugs

Big Horn:
Valley of the Give
Away

Vincent Crooked Arm
Marlin D. Not Afraid
Patrick Alden, Jr.
Secretary of the House

Dunmore:Black
Lodge

Conrad J. Stewart
V.Jeannie PrettyPaint
H. Noel Two Leggins

Reno:

Center Lodge
Oliver Half, Jr.
Shawn Backbone, Sr.
Kenneth G. Shane

Lodge Grass:
Valley of the Chief
Manuel Covers Up, Sr
Speaker of the House
R. Knute Old Crow, Sr
Woodrow Plainfeather

Wyola:

Mighty Few
Dana Wilson
Gordon Real Bird, Jr.
McKinley Tye Backbone

Staff

Ronald Ameson, Esq.
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Leslie Plainfeather
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Jackie M. Blacksmith,
Administrative Officer

William Old Crow
Finance Officer/Admin. Assist

Sheri Chandler
Office Assistant/Receptionist/
Editor

Kenny Pretty On Top
Maintenance/Custodian/
Sergeant at Arms

To: Montana Districting and Reapportionment Commission
Jim Regnier, Presiding Officer
Jon Bennion
Joe Lamson
Pat Smith
Linda Vaughey

From: The Undersigned Senators of the Crow Tribal Legislature

Re: State Legislative Redistricting

Date: April 19, 2010

Dear Honorable Commissioners:

Greetings, from the Legislative Branch of the Apsaalooke Nation. This letter is intended to express the interest of the undersigned Crow Tribal Legislators in ensuring that all federal and state anti-discriminatory laws, principally the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (as amended), as well as the Equal Protection Clauses of the United States Constitution and Montana Constitution, are followed when your Commission establishes the state legislative boundaries for the next ten years, beginning in 2011.

As you may know, the Crow Tribal Legislature does not have official political parties and the Senators of our Legislature do not align or affiliate with any political party for purposes of our legislative process. We would like the Commission to consider the importance of contested elections based on the merits of position and the strengths of the candidates, which is best carried out when legislative districts are drawn in a way that does not favor any political party but, rather, allows for full public deliberation in the course of a contested election. Every such contested election in Indian Country should include, to the fullest extent possible, the voice of American Indians.

The role of American Indians in the state political process increases every year as our population grows and as more tribal members become educated. We hope that Montana state government continues to reflect the views and interests of the First Montanans. As a distinct branch of a modern, constitutional tribal government, the Crow Legislature seeks to enhance tribal sovereignty, tribal economic prosperity, tribal health and well-being, and to make progress in our relationship with the State of Montana so that both sides benefit and all positive efforts are honored. In addition to tribal members, we the undersigned are Montana citizens who vote in state and federal elections. We have a strong stake in the future of Montana and will examine the actions of the Districting and Apportionment Commission very closely to ensure that no legislative boundary in Montana is drawn in a manner to dilute the strength of the Native vote.

Please take into consideration these concerns and please take into consideration those concerns which are highlighted by other tribal groups and individual Indians in Montana.

Aho (thank you).

Signed:

Kenneth G. Shaw - Reno

Sam. Conrad J. Egan

Mr. J. B. J. Anderson

Sam. J. A.

R. H. Clark

Maxim D. G. G.

Dr. H. G. Reno

Vincent B. B.

Mrs. H. B. H. H. H. 4-19-10

Samuel D. D.

Sam. Anson, Esq.

Carlson J. J.

James P. P.

Pat A. A.

John J. J.

W. W. W.

Ruler yellow and

Yates H. H.

Weiss, Rachel

From: dblyton@aol.com
Sent: Tuesday, April 20, 2010 10:56 AM
To: Districting
Subject: Redistricting

Hello:

First I want to thank Montana's Commission for taking time to be in Billings to take public comment.

As a candidate for legislature in HD #59, I want to say that the folks in Carbon County who were sliced off into other districts during the last redistricting, believe that this was to fulfill a political agenda.

I believe that with the wisdom of this Commission this will not happen to Montana voters again. I ask that you follow the County boundaries for Carbon County making it one district. The population changes should show this to be appropriate for Carbon County.

Some of our residents feel like step-children; even though they participate within the County, their vote falls into another district.

The voters in Carbon County play together in the sand box, let us be able to vote the same way.

Thank you again for your time, and presence in Billings

Joanne Blyton, Candidate for HD #59
6 Grays Lane
Joliet, MT 59041
406-962-3767

dblyton@aol.com

Weiss, Rachel

From: Lamson, Joe (D&A Commission)
Sent: Wednesday, April 21, 2010 8:24 AM
To: Districting
Subject: FW: April Redistricting Hearings: Need Your Help

Please add Senator Joe Tropila's comments to the record.

From: Joe Lamson [mailto:joelamson@bresnan.net]
Sent: Tuesday, April 13, 2010 6:46 AM
To: Lamson, Joe (D&A Commission)
Subject: Fw: April Redistricting Hearings: Need Your Help

----- Original Message -----

From: Joe Tropila
To: joelamson@bresnan.net
Sent: Thursday, April 08, 2010 11:03 AM
Subject: RE: April Redistricting Hearings: Need Your Help

Joe:

I will try to get the COT for the meeting, but if something conflicts I wish to say that Cascade County is very well apportioned the way it is presently configured as in the last reapportionment.

Joe Tropila

Weiss, Rachel

From: Dave & Nancy [daveandnancy@blackfoot.net]
Sent: Wednesday, April 21, 2010 9:23 AM
To: Weiss, Rachel
Subject: Redistricting

To whom it may concern,

I see no reason for redistricting in Montana at this time. We have many people moving out of areas and I want things to stay just as they are. At a later date possibly there could be an approximate count and than consider this idea.

I do not believe that political affiliation should be considered in redistricting. This should be done on population consideration only. It should be done in equal numbers as possible. They should be unbiased.

Current districts are not done fairly. They have divided communities in two.

Geographic boundaries should not be considered but population should.

Thank you for hearing me.

Respectfully,
Nancy J Engebretson
29777 Southside Road
Alberton, Montana 59820

Weiss, Rachel

From: Roy Brown [brown.roy@bresnan.net]
Sent: Wednesday, April 21, 2010 10:35 AM
To: Districting
Subject: comments on district criteria

Thank you for coming to Billings for your hearing. I did not speak at the event since many said what I would have said. I have nothing to gain one way or another in how you do the redistricting. I am up for reelection for my last term in the State Senate and if I win whatever you do will not affect me. But I have first hand experience in the political nature of the previous redistricting plan. While I was in the House I represented HD 14 before the 2003 plan was put into place. HD 14 was normally a Democrat leaning House District. After a tremendous amount of hard work I was able to squeak by and win in the 1998 election. The most Republican portion of the district was the precinct North of Poly Dr to the rim rocks. In 2003 that particular Precinct was removed from my District and a democrat leaning area was inserted to replace it. The already Republican leaning area was inserted into an already leaning Republican District. It made my efforts to win my new district 49 even more difficult.

There were 3 excellent plans put forward from the bipartisan Legislative Services Division that were fair. They were ignored for the very partisan plan put forward by the Democrats. That just is not right.

The best way to take all the politics out of this process and makes sure neither party has any advantage is to have a 1% maximum population deviation except for unusual circumstances

Thank you for your work in this process.

State Senator Roy Brown

Weiss, Rachel

From: Tom Llewellyn [tom@yellowstonegroup.com]
Sent: Wednesday, April 21, 2010 1:20 PM
To: Districting
Subject: redistricting

Good afternoon,

I attended the meeting in Billings and chose to email comments rather than speak at the time.

1. My voting address (home) is in Senate District 23 which make no sense since it take in west end Billings, to Roundup to East Billings then almost to Miles City. Under your definition of Communities of interest none of these areas are consist in needs or desires or have a census. Representation by a former County Commissioner in Musselshell County that was his interest ands shows no interest in Billings really disenfranchises voters in half of the district. He would even respond to emails or correspondence. Then to go the East side of Billings which really fits better with SD 24
2. Having a district which is 140 miles in length really is a disservice to the voters; first of all how do get candidates?; have legislators get to know the needs or people in such a district?
3. Have a compact district allows for the voters an opportunity to get to know their legislators and feel that their voice will be heard. Which is what government should be about: open, participation.

The gentleman from Miles City (believe he was the Democrat County Chairman said: the commission should start in the SE corner of Montana and give communities a voice since now they really don't have one with districts that goes to Roundup and south side of Billings (Briarwood).

I would hope that the commission would be fair to all of the voters in Montana and not continue to disenfranchise parts of the State and give the districts both contiguous, compactness and community interest that are similar in nature.

Thank you,

Tom

Home address is: 5819 Rimrock Road, Billings, MT 59106 and in SD 23

H. Thomas Llewellyn
Yellowstone Group, Realtors
3936 Avenue B, Suite D
Billings, MT 59102
406 655-9455
406 855-9455 cell

Weiss, Rachel

From: Joe Herbold [walleye@midrivers.com]
Sent: Wednesday, April 21, 2010 6:54 PM
To: Districting
Subject: redistricting

With this state it really doesn't what the districts are. The one man one vote mandate of the constitution applying to both the Senate and the House has created 2 houses of representatives and no form equal representation. The senate should have a member from each county. The house can have whatever districts the commission desires.

Until that time there will be no equal representation in this state. It is a legislative wrong to have the Senate based upon population the same as the House. What if Montana, South Dakota, North Dakota and Wyoming had 1 senator. Eastern Montana has no representation and it is an abomination, a moral wrong.

So, for all who deem politics more important than fair representation argue away, it really makes no difference in the end. Senate Distric 15 has over 17,000 square miles and represents 5 counties. The distance from 1 side of the district to the other is about 175 miles. You have got to be kidding me. Any rational person could see that this is all screwed up. Montana has about 145,000 square miles. One district almost 12% of the state, 1 senator, 6 counties.

Let's redistrict add another county or two, what the hey. Rural Montana has NO representation and will have none until this state actually has a Senate based on geography and a House based on population.

Respectfully,

Joe Herbold, PO Box 239, Jordan, 59337, walleye@midrivers.com

Kolman, Joe

From: Gary Branae [garybranae@gmail.com]

Sent: Thursday, April 22, 2010 9:33 AM

To: Districting

Subject: Redistricting comments

To Members of the Districting and Apportionment Committee:

As I had to leave before I could make my comments at the public meeting you held in Billings last Monday evening, I would like to take this means to let you know my views on some the issues that are before you. I do appreciate the fact that you are taking input from the public as you make your decisions.

I currently serve as State Senator for Senate District 27 here in Billings. Prior to my election to that seat I served as a member of the Montana House of Representatives for four terms. Therefore I have lived through the previous redistricting process. Since I will be termed out by the time the next redistricting process takes effect, I will not be directly effected by any decisions that are made by your commission. I might say that I am surprised by the continuing unrest among some, notably members of the Republican Party, regarding the last redistricting process. I, as a Democrat, was one who could have complained about the results of the last redistricting that took effect at the start of the campaign for my second term in the House. Certain areas of my first district, HD 17, leaned Democratic and were removed from the old district and replaced in the new district, HD 54, by areas in the western part of Billings that leaned more Republican. However, in retrospect, I see that this change made the district much more competitive, which I think is a good quality for all districts to have. I think we as citizens need to put trust into the comprehensive work that the commission does, accept those results, and realize that it is impossible for everyone to be completely satisfied with all the results.

With regard to the 1% versus 5% deviation that should be used in defining the new districts, I believe you should stay with the 5% that has been used in the past. I also believe that the commission should try to achieve a final plan that has the lowest possible deviation. If it is possible to achieve a 1% deviation, that would be commendable. But I not believe you should box yourself in by requiring that goal to be met in all cases. When taking into account all the requirements that must be met, there most likely will be situations where it is extremely difficult to achieve a deviation as low as 1%. Therefore by allowing up to a 5% deviation, which is legal, you have conditions that are much easier and effective in which to work.

I can understand some of the arguments for keeping districts within county lines. However, we know that when the requirements for population numbers within each district are considered, this is not always possible. I would encourage you, when possible to try to do the best you can in this area. It is important to remember, however, that county lines do not always define communities of interest.

I know there has been a lot of talk about having districts where the population shares common interests and similar views. However, I think we should recognize that diversity is also a part of the makeup of any group of people. I know that when I look at the people who live on my block there are many differences, from religious to socioeconomic to political. Diversity allows us as a people to become stronger and recognize there many different ways of thinking and working together. In other words, diversity can be good.

Again I commend you for allowing public input in your deliberations. It is important to know what the

4/22/2010

public thinks. However, I realize that you as a commission are much more informed and knowledgeable about these matters than we as individuals are. So when weighing the opinions of the people, also make your decisions in a way that will be best for all those concerned.

Yours truly,

State Senator Gary Branae
Senate District 27

Ed Halland
103 East Bridger Road
Bridger, Montana 59014-9413

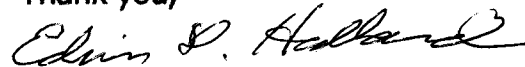
Montana Districting & Apportionment Commission
C/O Rachel Weiss, Legislative Services
P.O. 201706
Helena, Montana 59620-1706

Dear Rachel Weiss,

I was unable to attend any of the redistricting hearings but would like to submit some comments on the redistricting process. I do not feel that the districts drawn by the 2000 Commission treated all Montana residents equally. I would like to see the following criteria implemented when drawing districts in 2010.

1. Keep the population sizes close to equal. Population wise, the districts should not vary by more than 1%.
2. Keep neighborhoods and communities as in tact as possible while keeping population sizes equal.
3. Do not use political data to draw districts. Keep the process non-partisan.
4. Post the individual districts and their populations on the State of Montana Website.
5. Allow a review and comment period, by the public, before making final decisions.

Thank you,



Edwin D. Halland

Weiss, Rachel

From: Lamson, Joe (D&A Commission)
Sent: Thursday, April 22, 2010 3:52 PM
To: 'Tim Furey'
Cc: Weiss, Rachel
Subject: RE: Redistricting

Thanks for your thoughtful comments. I'll make sure they become part of the public record.

Joe Lamson

-----Original Message-----

From: Tim Furey [mailto:tjfurey@montana.com]
Sent: Thursday, April 22, 2010 1:30 PM
To: Lamson, Joe (D&A Commission)
Subject: Redistricting

Dear Redistricting Commission:

It is critical that all criteria be consistent with both the letter and spirit of the Voting Rights Act. This means that the Commission must maintain the traditional plus or minus 5% population deviation for all districts, which encourages and improves minority participation in the democratic process. Some have recently suggested a 1% deviation, which will suppress minority participation. If a 1% deviation is adopted, the State of Montana would be forced to unsuccessfully defend this anti-democratic provision in what is sure to be a costly lawsuit.

Second, it is of utmost importance to the integrity and legitimacy of our representative democracy that the state-wide plan be drawn so that neither Republicans nor Democrats control either legislative chamber simply due to district boundaries. Districts should be as competitive as possible to provide voters with meaningful choices. Second, with the 2010 U.S. Census currently underway, it only makes sense to use current districts as starting points for redistricting. This provides transparency for voters and decreases the appearance of gerrymandering. Lastly, communities of interest should remain intact. We must not artificially divide and contort the political boundaries of our communities simply for partisan gain.

With that in mind I do have a few comments regarding House District 91. A district which I currently serve. HD91 includes a portion of the east side of the City of Missoula, East Missoula, Milltown, Bonner, Clinton, Potomac, Rock Creek, a small part of upper, upper Miller Creek and an area south of Lolo to the county line. There are two components that just do not seem to fit in and a part that seems to be missing, thus dividing a community.

1. Upper, upper Miller Creek is such a small neighborhood that it seems like it should be added to the rest of Miller Creek and HD 93?.
2. The area south of Lolo in HD 91 divides it from the rest of Lolo. Can it be added into HD 100.

3. The area that seems to divide the community of Potomac is the area along the Blackfoot River and Hwy 200. Residents on the northwest side of Hwy 200 are in HD92, whereas the majority of Potomac residents live on the southeast side of Hwy 200 in HD91. Please consider all the homes along both sides of Hwy 200 from Bonner to Clearwater in HD 91.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service.

Tim

Tim Furey
Montana House of Representatives
District 91 "Four Rivers District"
P.O. Box 56
Milltown, MT 59851
406-546-6025
Email tjfurey@montana.com

Weiss, Rachel

From: Art & Pat Plowman [slavabogu@fastermac.net]
Sent: Thursday, April 22, 2010 8:03 PM
To: Districting
Cc: Regnier, Jim; Vaughey, Linda; Lamson, Joe (D&A Commission); Smith, Pat; Bennion, Jon
Subject: HELP! The last re-districting made a mess.

Dear All,

Thank you for your attention to this email.

My husband & I live in Carbon County. Our county has fewer than 10,000, and yet we are in three House and two Senate Districts. The last re-districting made a mess. Please, please, clean it up.

Art & Pat Plowman

PO Box 173

Boyd, MT 59013

p.s. Please consider the fact that God is watching.

Appointed by the Montana Supreme Court:

Jim Regnier, Presiding Officer

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Lakeside, MT 59922

(406) 459-3318

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Appointed by House Minority Leader Scott Sales:

Jon Bennion

89 Whitetail

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(406) 697-0568

jbennion@mt.gov

Weiss, Rachel

From: jsv [jsv@centurytel.net]
Sent: Saturday, April 24, 2010 4:05 PM
To: Weiss, Rachel
Subject: Redistricting

Please do not let politics influence the redistricting process. Be fair and unbiased. See that districts are equal in population.

Thank you for your consideration.

John & Sharon Vander Laan

97 E. Nicklaus

Kalispell, MT 59901

Weiss, Rachel

From: Marvin Quinlan [mwquinlan@yahoo.com]
Sent: Sunday, April 25, 2010 3:43 PM
To: Weiss, Rachel
Cc: Smith, Pat; Lamson, Joe (D&A Commission)
Subject: Legislative Re-Districting criteria comments

Rachel:

Would you please include this email in the public comments towards the criteria being considered by the Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission. Given the technical difficulties we had with the video-teleconference site in Miles City, I wanted to make certain the views of the Rosebud County Democrats were clear.

With regard to the current legislative districting plan, many of us, in Rosebud County, feel as though we were given short shrift and carved up into three different senate and house districts as an afterthought. Rosebud County, being a large, energy rich county, contributes immensely to the state's economy and to the Montana state budget. Yet, when it comes to allocating those same financial resources we generated, we feel like we have very little political clout, given the dilution of our voters by placing them in three different districts.

Just as Montana is the "Saudi Arabia" of coal, Rosebud County is the "Saudi Arabia" of coal and energy extraction in Montana. We are and have been the "Golden Goose" for the state, for more than thirty years. Politically, however, the Golden Goose has been "gutted" under the last two redistricting plans. You should also recognize that, unlike most eastern Montana counties, Rosebud County is not suffering a population decline. We may be rapidly aging (173% increase in elderly 65+ in the next decade--due to the aging workforce of the Colstrip 1970's energy boom, and related industries) and are experiencing the out-migration of many of our young people, but we will continue to maintain our population base, or even grow, as those workers are replaced in the coming years. That makes us pretty unique in this part of the state.

With regard to the criteria being considered, we believe that compactness, contiguity, respect for existing political boundaries, and keeping communities of interest intact should all be considered. As such, we would propose that Rosebud County be combined with Treasure County, or Musselshell County to make one compact, contiguous legislative district that respects the existing county political boundaries, and keeps communities of interest together. Treasure and Rosebud Counties have long worked together well and have many similarities. Now, with the opening of the Signal Peak coal mine in Musselshell County, we have another similarity with that county.

Regarding population equality, we strongly believe in the concept of "one person, one vote". If the Supreme Court accepts a 5% deviation, to meet other established criteria, that is acceptable to us. It appears a 1% deviation that violates other criteria will only put us back in court. Many years ago, as County Attorney, I advised the Rosebud County Commissioners to comply with the Voting Rights Act with regard to our Northern Cheyenne residents. They refused, resulting in an expensive federal lawsuit, and the required division of the county into three separate commissioner districts, in which a Native American won election, after further litigation, by only one vote.

Geographic boundaries are important some times, but in our part of the state, there are sufficient river bridges to make political boundaries more important. Personally I live across the Yellowstone River, just three miles north of Forsyth, but I am in a different Senate and House district than my fellow

Rosebud County and Forsyth residents, and I am currently allegedly "represented" by folks from Roundup.

Political makeup and party affiliation should have no role in determining the boundaries of a legislative district. Neither should any special consideration be given to incumbents. We do believe a legislator should be a resident of the district he or she represents, even in the more urban districts, which is not currently the case. As for a starting point for the redistricting process, we would recommend trying to start in Southeastern Montana this time, to prevent the carved up districts we currently have.

Finally, we thank you for taking on this very important and difficult task. You are in an unenviable position which will have tremendous impact on the direction this state moves in the coming decade. Best wishes as you move forward with this exercise.

Marvin Quinlan, Jr., Chairman
Rosebud County Democratic Central Committee
P.O. Box 578
Forsyth, MT 59327
mwquinlan@yahoo.com
356-2481

April 26, 2010

Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission
c/o Rachel Weiss, Legislative Services
PO Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706

Dear Commissioners,

As the time for the redistricting process nears, I ask for your help in making it a fair representation of our state population. This issue begs for an unbiased, non-partisan approach, and sadly, that doesn't often happen, and I definitely don't think it did the last time it was done.

That is why I urge the Commission to scrap the current districts and redraw them. We've come to understand sometimes you must stretch out a district to include a targeted group, such as Native Americans. I lived in Lake County for a number of years and the district Joey Jayne represented stretched from Arlee on the Flathead Indian Reservation to Browning on the Blackfoot Reservation. This should be the exception, not the norm. Gerrymandering for partisan reasons does nothing more than divide our State and foster long-term resentment and distrust.

I urge the Commission to form districts of equal size, keeping the variation to an absolute minimum. And I strongly urge the Commission to draw districts to represent people and their communities without the use of political data from previous elections. You should have a system by which any Montanan could listen to how the Commission performed its duty and see that bias was minimized. Again, I don't think that happened last time.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Laura E. Gregory
850 Saint Andrews Dr #1411
Columbia Falls MT 59912

April 16, 2010

Montana Districting & Apportionment Commission

c/o Rachel Weiss, Legislative Services

PO Box 201706

Helena, MT 59620-1706

Many Montanans are upset that the last redistricting was so partisan. What we are asking is for fairness for all. The following are points I would like to have be part of the redistricting process :

*One percent or less variation in the size of districts: Districts should be of equal size. It's not fair if one representative has to represent 9400 people, and the next one up the road only has 8600. The people in the smaller district get easier access to their government.

*No political data should be used to draw districts: Districts should be drawn to represent people, not partisan politics.

*Don't keep the current districts: The current districts divide communities in two, they have wildly varying population sizes – in general they're not unbiased.

Thank You.

Sincerely



Susie Moore

PO Box 4695

Whitefish, Montana 59937

406-261-7449

Weiss, Rachel

From: Susie Moore [Susie@Rockymtnre.com]
Sent: Monday, April 26, 2010 2:08 PM
To: Weiss, Rachel
Subject: Redistricting Process

Many Montanans are upset that the last redistricting was so partisan. What we are asking is for fairness for all. The following are points I would like to have be part of the redistricting process :

*One percent or less variation in the size of districts: Districts should be of equal size. It's not fair if one representative has to represent 9400 people, and the next one up the road only has 8600. The people in the smaller district get easier access to their government.

*No political data should be used to draw districts: Districts should be drawn to represent people, not partisan politics.

*Don't keep the current districts: The current districts divide communities in two, they have wildly varying population sizes – in general they're not unbiased.

Thank You.

Sincerely

Susie Moore
Rocky Mountain Real Estate
307 Spokane Avenue Suite 100
Whitefish, Montana 59937
406-862-9000
406-261-7449
www.rockymtnre.com

Weiss, Rachel

From: Dr. Ed [ed@climatephysics.com]
Sent: Monday, April 26, 2010 3:20 PM
To: Weiss, Rachel
Subject: Request for fairness in redistricting

Montana Districting & Apportionment Commission
c/o Rachel Weiss, Legislative Services
Post Office Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706

Dear Commission,

Americans like a contest. But they do not like an unfair contest. Therefore, we appoint "impartial" decision makers to do the job of redistricting.

When "impartial" decision makers take sides, it is as bad as having an umpire or referee take sides in a game. No one likes it.

You know how to make redistricting fair. You should let school children provide their suggestions. We may find school children can do a very good job ... up to the point where professional fine tuning may be needed.

The rules are simple:

1. All districts should contain an equal number of people within a one-percent deviation.
2. Only geographic and census data should be used, with no political data, which is why school children may do a better job.
3. Natural communities should kept together. Geographic and travel boundaries must be obeyed.
4. The length of the boundary lines should be kept small. (Mathematically, the ratio of $(\text{Boundary}^2 / \text{Area})$ should be as small as reasonable.)

Sincerely,

Edwin X Berry, PhD
439 Grand Ave #147
Bigfork, MT 59911

ed@edberry.com

Weiss, Rachel

From: Vaughey, Linda
Sent: Tuesday, April 27, 2010 9:57 AM
To: Weiss, Rachel
Subject: FW: Redistricting

Again, for your records. Linda

From: Jim Greaves [lbviman@blackfoot.net]
Sent: Saturday, April 24, 2010 5:27 PM
To: Regnier, Jim; Vaughey, Linda; Lamson, Joe (D&A Commission); Smith, Pat; Bennion, Jon
Cc: Greg Hinkle; Pat Ingraham
Subject: Redistricting

Mr. Regnier and Districting and Apportionment Commissioners:

In 2000, the California Legislature, with the blessing of BOTH "major" parties (Republican and Democrat) gerrymandered California's Congressional Districts so that no one had a clue how they arrived at the boundaries, other than by trading voters to ensure perpetual incumbency - even with their term limits. Win-win? For professional politicians, sure. Hardly for voters and taxpayers.

One district looked like a broad spaghetti noodle, the one Lois Capps (D) represents, spanning an area seemingly over 50 miles long by as few as [if not less than] a couple miles wide against the ocean, covering a narrow strip of Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and I think Ventura counties. This is obviously inadequate as a means of "community" basing of representation, is costly to citizens seeking to meet with her, and has become a sick joke for California, an example of the arrogance of those who live for power, rather than true public service.

I urge the Commissioners to ensure that Montana NOT follow the example of California, or any other place that has traded honor and integrity for assured votes. Their model contributed heavily in less than a decade to the potential bankruptcy of California due to the majority control by one party being assured of perpetual control of law making to the exclusion of fiscal restraint and reason.

California is now in the throes of death, its Democrat-controlled Legislature having strangled business with taxes burying them with regulations to the point that hundreds of thousands of jobs have been lost as major businesses shut down or cut employees to meet new costs associated with meeting new [and some might say inane, if not merely duplicative] regulations.

We were beginning to see the same atrophy of life in Montana's businesses when the down-turn in "the economy" helped drive several more major businesses under, some, like California's, only sustained by construction "industries" and highway projects, which may have short term benefits for employment, but long term loss of sustainable livelihoods without infusions of thousands of NEW people sustain the "industries". Montana's "last best place" will become just museum snapshots, if California's year 2000 district boundaries and recent business models are followed.

Please ensure that redistricting in Montana follows the Montana Constitution, and not political party goals. From what we can see, gerrymandering is highly over-rated when the result is bankruptcy!

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Jim Greaves
Thompson Falls MT

cc. Sanders County Republican Party Chair; Sanders County Ledger



The Big Sky Country

MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REPRESENTATIVE DICK BARRETT
HOUSE DISTRICT 93

HELENA ADDRESS:
CAPITOL BUILDING
PO BOX 200400
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-0400
PHONE: (406) 444-4800

HOME ADDRESS:
219 AGNES AVE.
MISSOULA, MONTANA 59801
PHONE: (406) 396-3256

COMMITTEES:
TAXATION
TRANSPORTATION
FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS

April 25, 2010

Districting and Apportionment Commission
Legislative Services Division
PO Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing in response to the Commission's request for public comment regarding redistricting criteria. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend any of the public hearings held on this topic, and so am submitting the following three comments in this written form.

1. Regarding the question of population deviation, I believe that the Commission should continue with the recent practice of allowing a maximum deviation in house district populations of plus or minus 5% (of the "ideal" district population of 1% of the entire state population). There are two reasons for this. One is that strict adherence to a significantly smaller deviation would mean that the application of other criteria (such as providing for intact communities of interest, assuring that district and existing political subdivision lines coincide, complying with the Voting Rights Act, etc.) would become extremely difficult, if not impossible. Moreover, although the principle of equal representation is of the utmost importance, there is no reason to believe that even if all district populations started at exactly the same size, they would stay that way, or even close to that way, over the ten years this particular set of districts will last. The reason, of course, is that local area population growth rates vary very widely across the state. Consider, for example, that over the period 2000 to 2009, the population of Gallatin County, at one extreme, *grew* by 33.2%, while that of Sheridan County, at the other extreme, *fell* by 21%. The implication clearly is that by the time new district lines were established based on the 2000 census, the residents of Gallatin County were already seriously underrepresented and those of Sheridan County overrepresented. This suggests that equal representation might be more effectively achieved by drawing districts in rapidly growing areas that are of less than the 2010 ideal size and districts in slowly growing, or contracting areas, of more than 2010 ideal size. Stated otherwise, when, for whatever reason, the Commission does allow for deviations from ideal size, any potential tendency towards unequal representation can be mitigated if the Commission is confident that such deviations are inversely related to the probable growth of population in the area.

2. With respect to competitiveness, I think that it goes without saying that gerrymandering of districts is clearly inappropriate; in an area where both political parties have roughly equal support, districts should reflect that competitive balance. I am somewhat concerned, however, by the suggestion that the statewide plan should be drawn in a manner that no one political party dominates control of either legislative body. That is an appropriate goal if, in fact, the parties enjoy roughly equal strength across the state. But suppose party A enjoys a firm majority in the total legislative popular vote. I do not think it would be appropriate to draw district lines such that party A had a supermajority in half the districts and was in the minority in the other half in order to assure equal representation in the legislature. Indeed, that appears to represent the very gerrymandering that we otherwise wish to avoid.

3. I support the notion of using existing districts as starting points in drawing new district lines, particularly where the residents of existing districts share strong mutual interests. The widely shared interests tend to define a kind of "natural" district. I cite the case of my own district, 93, as a case in point. With the exception of the University of Montana, HD 93 is almost exclusively residential, with a mix of owner occupied home and rentals that are occupied mainly by students. Although it is hard to know with certainty, families appear to have middle to high incomes (students, of course, typically do not); other than among students, demographic diversity is low. By far the dominant presence in the district is the University of Montana, and the university defines a very broad community of interest in the district. Many residents study, or work, or are retired from the University. The University also strongly affects residents without these direct involvements, by providing educational, recreational and cultural opportunities and through impacts on neighborhood environments, traffic, property values, and so forth. It seems to me that in the main, the district is relatively cohesive (a possible exception to this cohesiveness comes from the inclusion of two precincts in Miller Creek and the far southwest corner of Missoula in the Linda Vista area which are rather unlike the rest of the district) and that breaking it up in any very significant way would be a disservice to residents.

I would like to thank the Commission for this opportunity to comment, for your willingness to take on what appears to me at any rate to be a very complex and sensitive task, and for your commitment to achieving a redistricting plan that conforms with our democratic principles and sense of fairness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "David Bant". The signature is written in dark ink and includes a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

JOHN & SHARON VANDER LAAN
97 E. NICKLAUS
KALISPELL, MT 59901
406-755-1706

April 26, 2010

Montana Districting & Apportionment Commission
c/o Rachel Weiss, Legislative Services
P.O. Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706

Re: Redistricting

We want fair, unbiased and non-political redistricting this time around. Please **DO NOT** allow politics to influence what you do. Consider:

Districts should be **EQUAL IN SIZE**.

Do not use political data to draw districts.

Current districts **ARE BIASED**. Do not use current districts.

We are sick of politically based laws, decisions, etc. Here is your chance to do something right. Please do.

Thanks for your consideration.



John Vander Laan



Sharon Vander Laan

PHILIP L. CARDAN, M.D.

2944 SNOWGHOST DRIVE, WHITEFISH, MT 59937
PH: 406-862-1228 FAX: 406-863-2674

April 26, 2010

Montana Districting & Apportionment Commission
c/o Rachel Weiss, Legislative Services
P. O. Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706

Re: Redistricting

Dear Hon. Members of the Commission:

I write to ask that you take several steps to ensure a non-biased, non-partisan approach to our next re-distribution.

As you know, the term "Gerrymander" came about in Massachusetts in 1813. After re-drawing an election district in the shape of a beast with a head, wings and claws, it was thought to resemble a salamander. Gerry was the current governor, hence, "Gerrymander." It is my hope that we do better in Montana in 2010.

Currently, our districts vary widely in size—I know, I've walked several of them during the last two elections. The Commission should endeavor to ensure that district size is uniform.

If size matters, so does political makeup. Instead of drawing strange shapes which favor a specific political party, I would like to see districts based only on the number of Montanans that reside within the district. Montanans are notoriously unbiased in who they vote for, favoring the person over the party. Our re-districting process should reflect that history.

Compromise: I hope that the Commission will cordially act together, with each member bending over backwards to make sure that no single political party will jam its' power down the other's throat.

Finally, districts are not lottery tickets that secure an incumbent's job forever. We should not maintain our current distribution for time immemorial.

Very truly yours,



PHILIP L. CARDAN, M.D., F.A.C.S.

PLC:ad

Weiss, Rachel

From: Mike Jopek [jopek@cyberport.net]
Sent: Wednesday, April 28, 2010 5:44 AM
To: Districting
Subject: Redistricting comment

Dear 2010 Legislative Districting Commissioners:

I have had the pleasure of serving three terms as the representative from Whitefish's House District 4. I was unable to attend the Kalispell public hearing on redistricting criteria. I request the following information be entered into your public record.

In local news accounts Republican legislators have alleged the current redistricting plan dilutes representation for both Flathead County and the number of Flathead Republicans serving at the Legislature.

Both these assertions are not born up by census numbers or the results of the past three elections.

The 2000 Census reported 74,471 people living in Flathead County. The ideal house district required 9022 people. Dividing 74,471 by 9022 projects Flathead County should have received 8.25 house districts and 4.13 senate districts. The current plan based on the census figures drew 8 house districts and 4 senate districts Flathead County complying with the principle of one person, one vote.

Flathead County Republican legislators' second claim that districts were tilted unfairly against them does not hold up either. Republican candidates have been able to win in 6 of the 8 house districts and in 4 of the 4 Senate districts in the most recent election. Democrats have been successful in 2 of the 8 House districts and 0 of the 4 Senate districts in the most recent election.

Further, the Flathead is known for swing districts with the Kalispell seat revolving between Democrats and Republicans for many years, before and after redistricting. The Whitefish seat is similar, originally held by a Democrat, then a Republican, and again now a Democrat. The same holds true for Senate District 2, where the recent seat was Democrat, now Republican. Columbia Falls also saw changes from Democrat to Republican in the past House election.

Outside the District concept; recently a Democrat US Senator won the Flathead, a Democrat Governor won the Flathead, and a Democrat County Commissioner did as well. But also Republican Governors have won the Flathead in the past, Republican Congressmen and Senators have won, and Republican County Commissioners win as well. And, statewide, all five top elected positions are currently Democrat.

The point being that voters elect people, not parties.

I would urge the Commission to use criteria that uphold the Voting Rights Act, use the 5% population deviation to have the flexibility to protect small towns, cities and counties, and start with the existing districts that represent established Montana communities of interests.

Montana deserves a plan that is fair and competitive for all Montana.

Thank you for considering my comments. And thank you for your service to the great people of Montana.

Mike Jopek
State Representative -Whitefish
PO Box 4272
Whitefish MT 59937
250-1184 mobile
jopek@cyberport.net

Weiss, Rachel

From: David Hein [heinline@bresnan.net]
Sent: Wednesday, April 28, 2010 12:05 PM
To: Districting
Subject: Appropriate districting practices

I believe that the fair, impartial, and apolitical practice for determining legislative districts must include the following criteria:

- (1) non-party, random selection (one in which political party affiliation is not a part of the selection process).
- (2) mandatory maximum of 3% voter population deviation among districts (we can do better than the 5% guideline).
- (3) contiguous district boundary (the only exception to this would be where commercial, non-voter areas separate voter populations within a district).
- (4) discontinue all present legislative districts and start over (the existing districting has been politically influenced so it needs to be thrown out and start over!)

434 Parkway Dr.
Kalispell, MT. 59901

April 27, 2010

Dear Ms. Weiss,

Legislative Districts should be compact and contiguous. If they are not, it is difficult for representatives to be in close touch with their constituents. HD 15 is an example of a district that is not compact and contiguous. Also, I do not understand the configuration of a district such as HD 15 unless it is done for political reasons. Politics should be totally left out of the process.

It is also imperative that districts contain an equal number of people. My district, HD 6, was changed in the last redistricting effort. Since there are more people in my district than in some other districts, I am underrepresented.

The following should be considered during this process:

- 1. All districts should contain an equal number of people within a one-percent deviation.**
- 2. Only geographic and census data should be used, with no political data.**
- 3. Natural communities should be kept together. Geographic and travel boundaries must be obeyed.**
- 4. The length of the boundary lines should be kept small.**

Sincerely,



Julie Wolf

April 26, 2010

Montana Districting & Apportionment Commission
c/o Rachel Weiss, Legislative Services
Post Office Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706

Dear Commission,

We know that redistricting is the process of deciding who gets to vote for which state legislators. It happens every ten years [following the census].

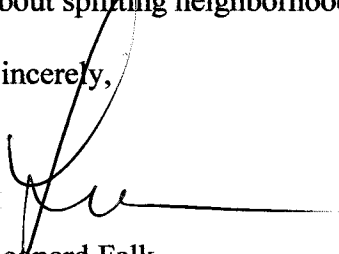
The process should be one of fairness with no politics involved. If done in strict accordance to the rules and applied evenly across the state and in the same manner no one will have complaints.

These points should make the process fair:

1. One percent or less variation in the size of districts: Districts should be of equal size. It's not fair if one representative has to represent 9400 people, and the next one up the road only has 8600. The people in the smaller district get easier access to their government.
2. No political data should be used to draw districts. Districts should be drawn to represent people, not partisan politics.
3. Please do not use Current districts as they go all over the map: The current districts divide communities in two, they have wildly varying population sizes -- in general they are not unbiased.

Let's take politics out of the process; it is about true representation of the neighborhoods and not about splitting neighborhoods for political gain.

Sincerely,



Leonard Falk
PO Box 10243
Kalispell, MT 59904
leonard@atmite.com

12074 Rippling Waters Rd.
Bigfork MT 59911
April 27, 2010

Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission
c/o Rachel Weiss, Legislative Services
P.O. Box 201706
Helena MT 59620-1706

Commissioners:

As a native of Montana and a resident here for most of my 65 years, I acknowledge and appreciate the important work of the Commission. However, I would like to provide some comments to guide your efforts.

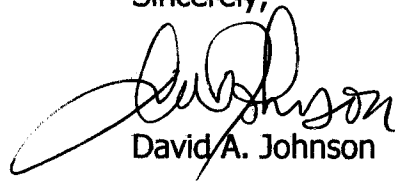
First, don't keep the current districts; I recommend you start over with a clean slate. The changes and shifts in Montana's population over the last ten years beg for a complete overhaul of our legislative districts.

The current districts divide communities and have significantly varying population sizes. Secondly then, districts should be as close to equal size as possible. I suggest you aim for one percent or less variation in the size of districts. It's about equitable representation; people in the smaller districts get easier access to their government.

Remembering the rancor of the last redistricting, I believe the current districts, in general, are biased. So finally, no political data should be used to draw the new districts. Districts should be drawn to represent Montanans, not partisan politics.

Many Montanans are rightly upset with how the last redistricting was turned into a partisan scheme. I urge you to find constructive ways to move forward with a fair, equitable and non-partisan redistricting process that achieves an end result all Montanans can embrace.

Sincerely,



David A. Johnson

Weiss, Rachel

From: Eric Olsen [eric@jakeoil.net]
Sent: Thursday, April 29, 2010 11:59 AM
To: Districting
Cc: jennifer olsen; Jan; janet franson; John Beck; Leonard Llewellyn; Wallace Bradberry; dennis scranton; John Steele
Subject: Formula comments.

I support fair non-partisan legislative districts!

*One percent or less variation in the population size of districts: It's not fair if one representative has to represent 9400 people, and the next one up the road only has 8600. The people in the smaller district get easier access to their government. The shape of the units should be a close to even sided as practical..

*No political data should be used to draw districts. Districts should be drawn to represent people, not partisan politics

*Don't keep the current districts: The current districts divide communities in two, they have wildly varying population sizes - in general they're not unbiased. No more pie shaped politically motivated districts, please...

--

Eric H. Olsen
406-896-4953 Office
406-696-2353 Cell 1

Weiss, Rachel

From: John Musgrove [musgrove@mtintouch.net]
Sent: Thursday, April 29, 2010 2:19 PM
To: Districting
Subject: commemts on redistricting

April 29,2010

Dear Commissioners:

I served four terms as one of Havre's two representatives. I would like to add my comments for your consideration in selecting legislative redistricting criteria.

Havre's legislative delegation has long recognized the importance of representing the interests of our community's dominant role as an economic trade center along the Hi-Line. Havre has argued through each past redistricting processes that Havre's interests as a trade center are best served by drawing two house districts that include major parts of Havre and the adjoining rural trade areas.

During the 2000 Redistricting Hearings, four plans were proposed for the Havre area. All four house district plans proposed splitting Havre. The Hill County Republicans supported Plan 100 which split Havre. The Hill County Commissioners supported Plan 200 which split Havre and the Democrats and Reservation communities supported Plan 300 which also split Havre.

Putting all of Havre in one district dilutes its representation at the Legislature and lessens representatives' accountability to the broader interests of the town and country residents that make up our regional trade area.

I suggest the commission adopt criteria that promote fair and competitive legislative districts, comply with the Voting Rights Act, and keep the 5% population deviation to protect small towns, cities and counties.

Thanks you for your consideration of my comments.

Sincerely,

John Musgrove

Weiss, Rachel

From: Margaret MacDonald [macmargaret@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, April 29, 2010 4:33 PM
To: Districting
Subject: Comments on Montana Districting and Apportionment

Dear Members of the Commission,

I was out of town on business when you held hearings in Billings last week, but wanted to offer some observations on your upcoming work. I also want to offer some reflections on some of the comments as reported in the newspaper. I represent House District 54 in South and West Billings

1) You are charged with a highly complex balancing act and what seems fair to one party, or demographic, may not always seem fair to another. It is going to require balancing sometimes conflicting values and interests, and that is neither simple nor easy. For instance, it may be that one of the values and guidelines directly conflicts with another value and guideline that you have laid out to guide your process.

2) I want to affirm and concur with comments made by Rep. Roundstone on the importance of drawing legislative districts that mirror Montana's American Indian population after decades of effectively excluding this important group of Montanans. I encourage you to continue to work to ensure that you can include fairness and balance in your districting process.

3) Five percent variation seems a reasonable factor to allow you to be able to form districts that reflect common interests, common trade areas balancing rural and urban characteristics, holding tribal communities and counties together as much as possible, and so on. Limiting yourself to a 1% variation would hamper these important values in shaping your process. When possible, try to hew closer to a 1%, but be flexible enough so that an arbitrarily low and inflexible standard forces you to bifurcate important communities of interest and subverts other important criteria as you district.

4) The suggestion was made that the current legislative district boundaries in Billings were perhaps arbitrary or gerrymandered. I have to say that does not reflect my experience with the House District I know best. House District 54 is a good case study to test that assertion.

- The vast majority of students in HD 54 attend Billings West High School, (including most of those in the far Eastern precinct, 54C, of the District) and Riverside Middle School (including those in the far Western precinct, 54A of the District). So, the District is closely aligned with the current distribution of students for high school and middle school set forth by Billings School District 2. Perhaps at one time the high school distribution in the core city of Billings was divided more east and west. For the past 20 years or so, the school distribution is divided is on more of a north and south plane, with much of South Billings now attending BWHS.
- Residences listed for sale in Precinct 54A (West end) and Precinct 54C (East end) of the District are selling in the same price range.
- Both the far west and far east precincts hold several mobile home neighborhoods.
- The District is a transportation corridor with I-90 transversing it from one end to the other.
- The District includes the north bank of the Yellowstone River from one end of the District to the other.
- Perhaps due to the transportation corridor, the District is experiencing similar residential-retail-commercial interface in all of its precincts.

5) The state legislature is closely divided between the two major political parties, while current statewide elected officers are overwhelmingly Democratic. That would suggest to me that the current apportionment of districts is not highly unfair, as members of the Republican party asserted during the Billings meeting last week, and if anything favors the Republican party in the state.

I wish you well in your deliberations.

Sincerely

Rep. Margie MacDonald
House District 54
406.652.6625

Weiss, Rachel

From: janet franson [coyote130@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, April 29, 2010 5:30 PM
To: Districting
Subject: make districts fair

My request is to make districting fair-NO political information!
janet franson roundup, mt

Weiss, Rachel

From: Mitch & Char Graff [mitch@nemont.net]
Sent: Thursday, April 29, 2010 7:17 PM
To: Districting
Subject: Redistricting

Hello,

We are writing to ask you to support fair non-partisan legislative districting.

*One percent or less variation in the population size of districts: It's not fair if one representative has to represent 9400 people, and the next one up the road only has 8600. The people in the smaller district get easier access to their government. The shape of the units should be as close to even sided as practical..

*No political data should be used to draw districts. Districts should be drawn to represent people, not partisan politics

*Don't keep the current districts: The current districts divide communities in two, they have wildly varying population sizes - in general they're not unbiased. No more pie shaped politically motivated districts.

Thank you,

Mitch & Char Graff
Spring Valley Quilting
81 Spring Valley Road
PO Box 586
Scobey, MT 59263

Weiss, Rachel

From: KD7DCR@netscape.com
Sent: Thursday, April 29, 2010 7:36 PM
To: Districting
Subject: Out thoughts!

Sirs:

In your process of "redistricting" within Montana....Please realize that we, down here in Whitehall, MT want:

NON POLITICAL DIVISION LINES...

Only "geometric" lines to "FAIRLY DIVIDE" our population are needed, or should be used.

NO GREAT VARIATIONS IN THE NUMBER OF "people" within each district... +/- 1% is enough!

ONLY CITIZENS of the USA shall be considered for population figures, since only THEY can VOTE!!

The existing districts NEED TO BE SCRAPPED AT ONCE.... NO "adjustments" at all....

JUST REDRAW EVERY LINE BASED ON THE NEW POPULATION FIGURES FOR RESIDENT CITIZENS.

Winter travel conditions, nor distance to be traveled, has NEVER entered into drawing the lines, and should NOT now!!!

Keep the SAME NUMBER OF DISTRICTS as now...no reason to increase, unless our population has grown by more than 10% from 2000 numbers! IF it has gone DOWN by 10%, then a REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF DISTRICTS SHOULD BE SUGGESTED AND VOTED UPON by THE VOTERS...directly by ballot.

ALL LINES DRAWN SHALL BE STRIGHT...No "curves" to create "pie cuts"...if you have to shave or add some count then "move the entire line segment" slightly to gain/lose the number needed. Hold Towns and small cities "together" whenever possible...no division lines down main street !!!

Once the "working draft" is done...PUBLISH IT FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR AT LEAST 60 to 90 days time, AND, then review and address each written comment made, with an explanation and change as indicated, go back for more comments in ANY AREAS so affected by changes...30 days comment period for this second step of changes. NO CHANGES will be made if NO COMMENTS are submitted in writing. Those making "comments" MUST BE A RESIDENT INSIDE THE DISTRICT BEING SO ADDRESSED...no "outsiders" comments will have any force or bearing on such matters.

That's it... Clean up this Partisan, Political, mess that we now have...we are watching you.

Mel Frost
Marilyn Frost
Brian Frost
Becky Frost
etal.

Netscape. Just the Net You Need.

Weiss, Rachel

From: JAN ROGERS [typistjan@netzero.net]
Sent: Thursday, April 29, 2010 9:29 PM
To: Districting
Subject: districting in Montana

We support fair non-partisan legislative districts!

*One percent or less variation in the population size of districts: It's not fair if one representative has to represent 9400 people, and the next one up the road only has 8600. The people in the smaller district get easier access to their government. The shape of the units should be as close to even sided as practical..

*No political data should be used to draw districts. Districts should be drawn to represent people, not partisan politics

*Don't keep the current districts: The current districts divide communities in two, they have wildly varying population sizes - in general they're not unbiased. No more pie shaped politically motivated districts, please....

Jan Rogers, Polson, MT

Weiss, Rachel

From: Montana Shrugged [montanashrugged@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, April 29, 2010 11:46 PM
To: Districting
Subject: redistricting comment

We support fair non-partisan legislative districts!

*One percent or less variation in the population size of districts: It's not fair if one representative has to represent 9400 people, and the next one up the road only has 8600. The people in the smaller district get easier access to their government. The shape of the units should be as close to even sided as practical..

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--

The Montana Shrugged Group
Billings Montana
www.montanashrugged.com

Do you know where your polling place is located? Don't forget to VOTE in the primary election!

Weiss, Rachel

From: Jennifer Olsen [jennifer@jakeoil.net]
Sent: Thursday, April 29, 2010 11:47 PM
To: Districting
Subject: redistricting comment

I support fair non-partisan legislative districts!

*One percent or less variation in the population size of districts: It's not fair if one representative has to represent 9400 people, and the next one up the road only has 8600. The people in the smaller district get easier access to their government. The shape of the units should be a close to even sided as practical..

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*Don't keep the current districts: The current districts divide communities in two, they have wildly varying population sizes - in general they're not unbiased. No more pie shaped politically motivated districts, please....

--

Jennifer Olsen
406-672-1170

Confidentiality Notice:

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While I'm thankful the thief-in-chief has awakened the sleeping giant, being awake isn't enough. Get informed, get INVOLVED, get them OUT. Actions have consequences, ensure the progressives are rewarded properly for theirs.

Weiss, Rachel

From: Mrs. Trista [itbjamn@yahoo.com]
Sent: Friday, April 30, 2010 7:05 AM
To: Districting
Subject: districts

To whom it may concern:

I support fair non-partisan legislative districts!

*One percent or less variation in the population size of districts: It's not fair if one representative has to represent 9400 people, and the next one up the road only has 8600. The people in the smaller district get easier access to their government. The shape of the units should be a close to even sided as practical..

*No political data should be used to draw districts. Districts should be drawn to represent people, not partisan politics

*Don't keep the current districts: The current districts divide communities in two, they have wildly varying population sizes - in general they're not unbiased. No more pie shaped politically motivated districts, please.

Thanks,
TJ

Weiss, Rachel

From: Janice Linn [bringsdogtowork@q.com]
Sent: Friday, April 30, 2010 8:00 AM
To: Districting
Subject: Redistricting

No more gerrymandering
No more rat-shaped and pie slice districts
Be STATESMEN, not politicians

J. Linn
Billings

Weiss, Rachel

From: Mia DeLode [dogone@ttc-cmc.net]
Sent: Friday, April 30, 2010 9:13 AM
To: Districting
Subject: redistricting

Dear Committee,

No political data should be used to draw up the districts.

Population sizes should not vary by very much and the size of the district should be kept as small as possible so the representative can actually represent his district.

The current districts do not seem to be working well--some like type communities are split up and sizes and population levels are not consistent.

Please fix the current mess.

Thank you,
Mia DeLode

Carolyn Hurst
155 Wright Way
Marion, MT 59925

April 28, 2010

Montana Districting & Apportionment Commission
c/o Rachel Weiss, Legislative Services
P. O. Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706

Dear Ms. Weiss:

As it is again time for redistricting in Montana, it is also time to change the present system of drawing districts, for the good of all citizens of this state. A change based on fairness and not political advantage is needed when making redistricting decisions.

I would like to see a fresh start by scrapping present districts, and drawing new lines that accurately represent the people in the communities affected by the districts.

I would like to see one percent or less variation in the size of districts.

I would not condone the use of political data to draw district lines.

Let's make this process a vital step toward restoring honesty and fairness in our representative government.

Yours truly,



Carolyn Hurst

Weiss, Rachel

From: Grumpy [xfirstsergeant@yahoo.com]
Sent: Friday, April 30, 2010 9:54 AM
To: Districting
Subject: We support fair non-partisan legislative districts!

We support fair non-partisan legislative districts!

*One percent or less variation in the population size of districts: It's not fair if one representative has to represent 9400 people, and the next one up the road only has 8600. The people in the smaller district get easier access to their government. The shape of the units should be a close to even sided as practical...

*No political data should be used to draw districts. Districts should be drawn to represent people, not partisan politics

*Don't keep the current districts: The current districts divide communities in two; they have wildly varying population sizes. - in general they're not unbiased. No more pie shaped politically motivated districts, please!

Ken and Karen Matthiesen
PO Box 325
Plains, MT 59859

©;©-

Weiss, Rachel

From: Sewing Center West [sewinfo@billingssewingcenter.com]
Sent: Friday, April 30, 2010 10:01 AM
To: Districting
Subject: Redistricting

Dear Districting and Apportionment Commission,

Please consider this information when making your decision regarding redistricting.

*One percent or less variation in the population size of districts: It's not fair if one representative has to represent 9400 people, and the next one up the road only has 8600. The people in the smaller district get easier access to their government. The shape of the units should be as close to even sided as practical..

*No political data should be used to draw districts. Districts should be drawn to represent people, not partisan politics.

*Don't keep the current districts: The current districts divide communities in two, they have wildly varying population sizes - in general they're not unbiased. No more pie shaped politically motivated districts, please....

Sincerely,

Amy Hanson (Billings, MT)

Weiss, Rachel

From: M. E> [saddlemule2@gmail.com]
Sent: Friday, April 30, 2010 3:01 PM
To: Districting
Subject: gerrymandering

Gentlemen:

There should be no Gerrymandering allowed when it comes to drawing lines to favor one party over the other.

No political data should be used to draw districts. The districts should be drawn to represent people not politics.

Do not keep the current districts as they divide communities and they are wildly different in population sizes.

No more strange shaped district to favor one party over the other.

M. E. Nichols
box 20676
Billings, Mt

Weiss, Rachel

From: Grace Larson [walker22@montana.com]
Sent: Friday, April 30, 2010 5:35 PM
To: Districting
Subject: Redistricting

To simplify the district for voters and those who represent us , Please consider using County Lines ; example would be Rosebud County and Treasure County as a district . These two counties share so many activities including the Rosebud/Treasure Fair each year .

Thank you so much for your consideration . Grace E. Larson Forsyth , MT 59327
406-356-2854
walker22@montana.com

Weiss, Rachel

From: sharon [sprintz@blackfoot.net]
Sent: Friday, April 30, 2010 7:37 PM
To: Districting
Subject: pie shape redistricting

To Whom it concerns: I would like to complain about the current redistricting efforts going on in the Missoula region with COMPLETE disregard for the population make-up. It looks to me that this is all a political "divide" to influence the representation and does not reflect the WHOLE community by shifting the data to represent what "party affiliation" would like to see---- Let's be honest about what is going on and divide the districts fairly to represent the PROPER data instead of trying too manipulate the University vote into ALL districts. This "PIE" shaped nonsense has to stop. I will not be manipulated in this fashion nor will you cancel my vote by covering me up with views and people who don't reflect my views on issues that concern my neighbors and I. There is an avalanche of evidence that will put your efforts in great jeopardy by trying to influence the redistricting plans to suit your "needs". Divide the population "fairly" or leave it alone. We are watching what you do and how you do it. KEN PRINTZ Missoula, Mt

Weiss, Rachel

From: palomasolo@blackfoot.net
Sent: Saturday, May 01, 2010 9:03 AM
To: Districting
Subject: Re-districting Montana

Please follow these guidelines when redistricting Montana:

*One percent or less variation in the population size of districts: It's not fair if one representative has to represent 9400 people, and the next one up the road only has 8600. The people in the smaller district get easier access to their government. The shape of the units should be as close to even sided as practical.

*No political data should be used to draw districts. Districts should be drawn to represent people, not partisan politics.

*Don't keep the current districts: The current districts divide communities in two; they have wildly varying population sizes. - in general they're not unbiased. No more pie shaped politically motivated districts, please!

Thank you & Happy Trails,
Dick Wells, HD 13, SD 7

Weiss, Rachel

From: Bruce Tutvedt [tutvedt@montanasky.us]
Sent: Saturday, May 01, 2010 9:51 PM
To: Districting
Subject: Redistricting

Redistricting Committee

I would request that the committee redistrict the state legislative districts in a manner that lets the voters in communities of interest select a candidate to represent them in the legislature. The voters should decide who their representative is not a skewed political system. The districts should as be contiguous and compact as possible. To not disenfranchise any voters the districts should be as close as to the same population as possible, no more than 1% population deviation. The commission should allow six Native American house districts as that is their percentage of the population in Montana to protect their minority voting rights. To use the current districts as a starting point would be to profligate a past wrong, start over with a new and fair map. The fairest way would be to allow legislative services to draw several options using the parameters that the commission chooses and from them select the map that most fits the mandates of the constitution. I would start with the six Native American districts and move out from there.

Senator Bruce Tutvedt
2335 West Valley Dr.
Kalispell MT 59901
406-257-9732

Weiss, Rachel

From: Niteed - [niteed@msn.com]
Sent: Sunday, May 02, 2010 11:19 AM
To: Districting
Subject: Re redistricting
Attachments: Redistricting letter.docx

Dear members of the Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission,

I strongly oppose any plan that would put all of Havre into one state House district. I support the current approach, which splits Havre and joins each section of the town with the rural trade region that Havre serves.

Putting all of Havre in one district would dilute its representation in the Legislature. Also, representatives would be less accountable to the broader interests of the town and rural residents who make up our regional trade area. I believe that the two-district approach better serves all of us, and is supported by local residents.

I also support the 5% deviation standard. It has worked well to provide fair representation in Montana.

Thank you for your time.

Karen Datko

1208 Fourth St.

Havre MT 50501

406-265-3280

Weiss, Rachel

From: Don Reed [donreed@usadig.com]
Sent: Sunday, May 02, 2010 6:35 PM
To: Districting
Subject: Public comment

I attended the hearing in Billings and heard many comments from many people. Some of them (from people from both parties) made sense and some seemed to be a little far-fetched. My thoughts are as follows and reflect my personal opinions and circumstances.

I live in Lockwood, a community in Yellowstone County that is unincorporated, rapidly growing and quite unique. Annexation into the City of Billings isn't seriously considered an option by either Billings or Lockwood people. It has extensive industrial, commercial and trucking firms as well as very diverse residential neighborhoods (for example, half of the homes in our community are mobile homes yet there are many who live in upscale houses with acreages). Many residents desire to have a government that is more responsive to our particular needs. However, we are currently governed by 3 County Commissioners who don't seem to want any input from others in regards to how our affairs are managed. The 2000 census indicated that we had 4300 residents but, in looking closely at the data, that figure covered only a portion of the geographical area most of us regard as Lockwood. Current estimates are that 7-10,000 people live here. Obviously, we are anxiously awaiting the results of the 2010 census.

If we do, in fact, have a population that is close to the 1% of the total Montana population--a real possibility--I feel that Lockwood can and should cover an area that would constitute its own legislative district. **I would hate to see it split into separate legislative districts.** We don't have a great deal in common with either Billings (the Blue Creek/Briarwood area of south Billings is currently in the same HD44 Lockwood is in) or the vast rural area to the east (which is covered by our SD22). The Yellowstone River forms a natural boundary to the north and the Crow reservation is to the south.

An observation I had at the hearing were that some districts (like those around Miles City) currently divide communities and counties into several parts. I don't think that is right and, hopefully, that can be avoided.

Also, there are many more sparsely populated areas in Eastern Montana than there are populated ones. If you are going to try to attain a degree of compactness, contiguity and communities of common interests then, it seems to me, that **limiting yourself to a 1% variation would be just about impossible. 5% seems to be more realistic.** One would have to travel many, many miles in some areas to encounter the the few hundred people necessary to make such a precise demarcation. Achieving a 1% variability would probably mean that other criteria would have to be compromised.

I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts with you.

Thanks,
Don Reed
Lockwood, MT

Kolman, Joe

To: Pamela Ellis
Cc: Weiss, Rachel
Subject: RE: REDISTRICTING COMMENTS DUE MAY 14

Thank you for your comments. They will be included in a packet the commissioners will receive before their May 28 meeting.

Sincerely,

Joe Kolman
Research Analyst
406-444-9280

From: Pamela Ellis [mailto:pamellis50@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, May 03, 2010 3:55 PM
To: Districting
Subject: Re: REDISTRICTING COMMENTS DUE MAY 14

TO: **Montana Redistricting Commission** districting@mt.gov
FROM: **Pam Ellis, Candidate, HD #47**

I am running in an urban district that shares a lot of common bonds. I encourage the Commission to maintain flexibility in your criteria. The Constitutional 5% Population District Deviation which probably impacts rural and less populous districts more significantly than urban districts. Computers make it possible to get within 1% deviation but don't account for the realities "on the ground" of community integrity.

Our state has a reasonable balance or representation in the legislature between parties. When I grew up in Montana, I only knew one Democrat (and it wasn't either of my parents). We are now a more diverse state and we have legislators from both parties. Gerrymandering in the manner of some of the "states in the news" isn't healthy for establishing or maintaining effective working relationships. Starting with current districts provides a logical, transparent way for citizens and legislators to understand which districts are likely to grow in size and which will shrink. I know we've experienced a lot of growth and I would anticipate some changes to the district.

5/3/2010

Districting and Apportionment Commission
PO Box 201706
Helena, MT 5920-1706

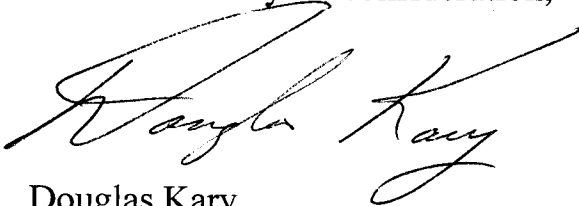
May 1, 2010

Commissioners,

I do hope this commission will not keep the current districts, but divide the state to represent its people, not Democrats and Republicans, but Montana voters. No more pie shaped, or long and skinny politically motivated districts. There should be no political data used to draw these districts whatsoever!

I support a fair non-partisan re-districting of Montana. With simple math and population data that is available this task should not be that difficult overall. There will be some problems areas, due to natural terrain, rivers, mountains etc. but these are easily explained. I look forward to seeing a re-districted Montana that is fair to all voters and keeps neighborhoods together.

Thank You for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Douglas Kary". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and address.

Douglas Kary
415 W. Wicks Ln.
Billings, MT 59105

Weiss, Rachel

From: Toni Hagener [tonihgr@yahoo.com]
Sent: Tuesday, May 04, 2010 4:18 PM
To: Districting
Subject: redistricting

Dear Commissioners,

I served three terms (95,97, 99) with Ray Peck in what was House District 90. As a result of that service, I believe it is extremely important that Havre and its surrounding areas have two persons representing the diverse population and business interests of our community. This system has worked effectively in the past and should continue in the future.

Toni Hagener

Weiss, Rachel

From: Kenneth D. Peterson [Kenneth59@bresnan.net]
Sent: Tuesday, May 04, 2010 4:25 PM
To: Districting
Subject: In re: redistricting

I want to emphasize that the redistricting plan needs to reflect the demographics of the State of Montana. Reading a recent Billings Gazette editorial (Tuesday 4 March 2010), it seems like it agrees. It pretty much said that the balance in the legislature should reflect the demographics. If it is redistricted according to the demographics and the other criteria adopted, then the make up of the legislature will be what it is based on the efforts of candidates and the voters and it will be whatever it is. The last redistricting was designed to try to equalize the political parties. That is not acceptable in this day and age, when there are other parties that are emerging. As a person who was raised on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, I am pleased that some of the American Indians are coming forth to run for office. Because many have not been around as long as some of the rest of us, some may think this is a new phenomena. That is not necessarily true. A family friend from the Blackfeet (An American Indian) served for many years in the legislature. His name was Percy "Babe" DeWolf of Babb, Montana. I am sure there are others. It is very difficult to denominate an American Indian. I suppose everyone uses the enrollment criteria. But is a $\frac{1}{4}$ blood an Indian or $\frac{3}{4}$ of some other race. I can tell you that there are enough so-called American Indians in Glacier County, Lake County, Blaine County, Big Horn County and Roosevelt County, to elect whomever they wish if they vote as a block. I expect they do not and do not want their vote to be whatever the Committee structures it to be. The Rocky Boy reservation has enough members to clearly influence the elections in Hill County. Currently, I believe there are County Commissioners in Glacier that are enrolled members of the Blackfeet tribe. I know that there are two members of the County Commission in Big Horn County that are enrolled members of the Crow Tribe. I have worked with them. I am sure that the Blackfeet Tribe and Salish and Kootenai Indians would say there is a community of interest. Having been raised on the Blackfeet and observing the Flathead reservation, I believe that there is less of a community of interest between them than there is with the other persons in Lake County. I think the same is true with the Blackfeet and the other residents of Glacier County. I guess what I am saying that there is no useful purpose drawing districts that categorize the Indians in one group. In the early days they warred with one another. They are persons just like all persons in Montana with the same desires and goals as any others. I think the redistricting should not be political from any political point of view. Ken Peterson, Individually and as Montana State Representative HD 46.

Weiss, Rachel

From: tom church [tomchurchwa@yahoo.com]
Sent: Tuesday, May 04, 2010 6:09 PM
To: Weiss, Rachel
Subject: redistricting

Districting and Apportionment Commission:

I feel it is imperative that you do a better job of following your own guidelines for drawing boundaries for the next ten years. I live in the city limits of Billings, MT, yet share a State Senator from Roundup with folks who live in western Prairie County.

How can the commission explain to anyone that the criteria of population, compact and contiguous districts, following lines of political units, following geographical boundaries, and keeping communities of interest intact was even remotely adhered to in creating MT Senate 23?

Senate 23 covers 6,227 square miles and parts of Custer, Rosebud, Musselshell, and Yellowstone Counties. That hardly qualifies as compact, following political or geographical borders, or keeping communities in tact.

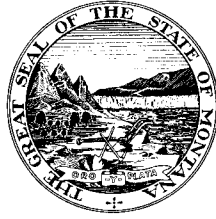
Surely you can do better than that.

please draw lines that are better representative of the good old "common sense" that Montanan are noted for.

thanks,

tom church
1232 kootenai av
billings, mt

Montana State Senate



MIKE COONEY
SENATOR

HOME ADDRESS:
713 PYRITE CT.
HELENA, MONTANA 59601
(406) 443-0144
cooneyemail@aol.com

May 3, 2010

Dear Commissioners:

I am the Senator for Senate District 40. My district includes the State Capitol area, Helena's eastside, north central neighborhoods and the adjoining suburbs directly north of city. The district accurately reflects the diversity of interests that make up the Helena community.

The district shares an economy where state and federal government, health care, education, and supporting retail businesses play a dominant role in local residents' daily lives. District residents utilize common school systems, transportation networks, media markets, recreational, cultural and social amenities.

Anyone familiar with Helena's community is keenly aware the interests of city and suburban dwellers are richly woven together through many issues and common networks. Representing voters of Senate District 40 district requires a senator to look for solutions which cross traditional "political boundaries" to deal with the hundreds of issues we face each legislative session.

I have had the privilege of serving in both houses of the Legislature and as Montana's Secretary of State. I would argue the Legislature best serves our citizens when it fairly reflects the healthy diversity of interests and viewpoints of all Montanans. Criteria need to be selected that promote fair and competitive legislative elections. Districts should be drawn so no one political party dominates control of the Montana House or Senate.

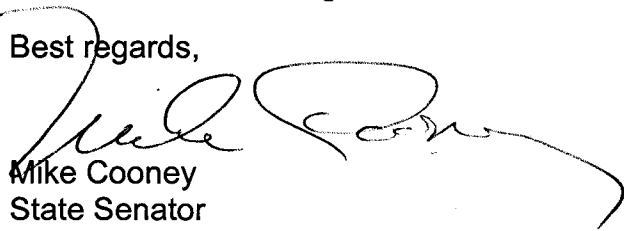
Complying with the Voting Rights Act needs to remain a mandatory criterion. Montana has greatly benefited from having fair and articulate representation of American Indian communities now in both the House and Senate. Montana proudly leads the nation in the number of American Indian legislators.

All previous Montana redistricting commissions and the US Supreme Court established a plus or minus 5% population deviation for the drawing of legislative districts to uphold the principle of one person one vote. The 5% deviation gives the commission the flexibility to take care of different communities, city and county lines, imposing geography, and uphold the Voting Rights Act.

In closing I would suggest a logical and transparent way for citizens and legislators to understand the effects of the 2010 Census results is to use as a starting place the existing legislative districts. It is the simplest way to determine which districts are likely to grow in size and which will have to shrink.

Thank you for considering my suggestions and for your service to the people of Montana in taking on this most interesting of tasks.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Cooney", with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Mike Cooney
State Senator

Weiss, Rachel

From: cyndi forbes [cyndiforbes@yahoo.com]
Sent: Wednesday, May 05, 2010 4:20 PM
To: Districting
Subject: a message for you


I am Cyndi Forbes of 2526 Heritage Drive, Helena, MT 59601. I live in House District 79.

I have friends of Indian blood lines. We have had discussions on this redistricting topic and here are my conclusions.

A community of interest, such as an Indian reservation, ought **not** be split into separate districts! Similarly, a community of interest such as a neighborhood, small city or town, or when the population allows, a county should be kept whole. Urban and rural districts have distinct interests and should, where possible, remain whole. Our Helena valley and the city of Helena are a good example of that. Now there is north valley populations and center of town populations in one district. There needs are not the same.

When communities of interest are split and no rational reason given, save that competitive districts are being created, what follows are generally feelings of distrust in a system that would allow partisan interference in a process that ought to be objective and fair.

Please, this time, restore Montana's faith in the redistricting process. **Disallow partisan engineering !!**

Cyndi Forbes 
Home: (406) 443-3219
cyndiforbes@yahoo.com

Weiss, Rachel

From: Kimberly Olsen [kimberlyolsen2@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, May 05, 2010 5:52 PM
To: Districting
Subject: Redistricting

I support fair non-partisan legislative districts!

*One percent or less variation in the population size of districts: It's not fair if one representative has to represent 9400 people, and the next one up the road only has 8600. The people in the smaller district get easier access to their government. The shape of the units should be as close to even sided as practical..

*No political data should be used to draw districts. Districts should be drawn to represent people, not partisan politics

*Don't keep the current districts: The current districts divide communities in two, they have wildly varying population sizes

NO MORE POLITICALLY MOTIVATED DISTRICTS PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE!!

Weiss, Rachel

From: Bob Scott [bob@qeymin.com]
Sent: Wednesday, May 05, 2010 6:01 PM
To: Districting
Subject: Redistricting

Dear Commission:

As a resident of Hamilton and of Ravalli County, I support the present Legislative District boundaries. Unless our population distribution in Ravalli County has changed substantially as it relates to the rest of Montana, and slight population boundary adjustments are necessary, I believe the present district boundaries should be retained. The present boundaries are fair, well-balanced, and match with existing local communities and market areas.

Bob Scott
102 Geneva
Hamilton, Montana
406-375-0234

Weiss, Rachel

From: Janie Wunderwald [mjbwunder@bresnan.net]
Sent: Wednesday, May 05, 2010 6:34 PM
To: Districting
Subject: redistricting opinion

Your Commission has the opportunity to be a model for the rest of the nation. Abandon partisan politics when debating redistricting. Election results should not be considered when drawing new districts.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Mary Jane Wunderwald
Clancy
HD 77

Weiss, Rachel

From: Jaclyn Burgess [burgessforhd13@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, May 05, 2010 10:22 PM
To: Districting
Subject: Legislative Redistricting Comments

Dear Commission Members:

I am sending this email in support of fair and competitive districts across Montana; in support of upholding the Voting Rights Act to protect reservation representation in the legislature; and in support of using the existing legislative districts as a starting point for the new plan. In addition, I support the 5% population deviation as has been successfully used in the past.

Respectively submitted,

Jaclyn Burgess
Trout Creek MT

Weiss, Rachel

From: Helen Diehl [hdiehl1237@hotmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, May 06, 2010 1:47 PM
To: Districting
Subject: Redistricting Montana House and Senate Districts

My name is Helen Hoffman
Address: 16 Sidewinder Loop
Clancy, MT 59634
House District: 77
Senate District: 39
I vote in Montana City

I am concerned about the redistricting of our house and senate districts in 2010. Many felt that the districts in 2000 were manipulated and some of them were very strange and difficult for the candidates to work. Fairness for all is a basic American principle.

I believe we should have one person, one vote. Districts should differ in population to the smallest extent possible.

Thank you.

Helen Diehl Hoffman

The New Busy is not the old busy. Search, chat and e-mail from your inbox. [Get started.](#)

Weiss, Rachel

From: Jeff Lowe [fischjager@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, May 06, 2010 2:22 PM
To: Districting
Subject: Fairness in redistricting

To whom it may Concern;

I believe that a 1% variance between the population of one legislative district and another is fair and allows for some geographical adjustment between certain areas of Montana.

I do not support the current standard and would encourage the redistricting committee to listen to the voters in this state and make adjustments for new districts accordingly.

Sincerely,

Jeff Lowe
121 Severns Lane
Hamilton, Montana 59840
406-369-5467

Weiss, Rachel

From: Dallas D Erickson [dallas@accessmtwildblue.com]
Sent: Thursday, May 06, 2010 7:35 PM
To: Districting
Subject: I support fair non-partisan legislative districts!

May 6, 2010

I support fair non-partisan legislative districts!

***One percent or less variation in the size of districts: It's not fair if one representative has to represent 9400 people, and the next one up the road only has 8600. The people in the smaller district get easier access to their government.**

***No political data should be used to draw districts. Districts should be drawn to represent people, not partisan politics**

***Don't keep the current districts: The current districts divide communities in two, they have wildly varying population sizes — in general they're not unbiased.**

Dallas D. Erickson
4479 Store Lane
Stevensville MT 59870
(406)777-5862
Cell: (406)240-5277
dallas@accessmtwildblue.com

Weiss, Rachel

From: Jay Printz [jprintz1@msn.com]
Sent: Thursday, May 06, 2010 8:53 PM
To: Districting
Subject: I support fair non-partisan legislative districts!

I support fair non-partisan legislative districts!

***One percent or less variation in the size of districts: It's not fair if one representative has to represent 9400 people, and the next one up the road only has 8600. The people in the smaller district get easier access to their government.**

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Name: Jay Printz

Address: 226 Marcus St. Hamilton, MT 59840

Date: May 05, 2010

Weiss, Rachel

From: Candi Jerke [medbow@bresnan.net]
Sent: Thursday, May 06, 2010 9:17 PM
To: Districting
Subject: Redistricting

I feel that the four criteria for the redistricting is appropriate and fair. It is important to start from what we have and build on it. The elections in this last cycle have been very competitive. I live in Ravalli County and by leaving the districts similar to what they were last time, would be a good thing.

Candace Jerke
343 One Horse Creek Rd.
Florence, MT 59833

Weiss, Rachel

From: Gordon Read [ichthus@cybernet1.com]
Sent: Thursday, May 06, 2010 9:29 PM
To: Districting
Subject: I support fair non-partisan legislative districts!

Importance: High

I support fair non-partisan legislative districts!

*One percent or less variation in the size of districts: It's not fair if one representative has to represent 9400 people, and the next one up the road only has 8600. The people in the smaller district get easier access to their government.

*No political data should be used to draw districts. Districts should be drawn to represent people, not partisan politics

*Don't keep the current districts: The current districts divide communities in two, they have wildly varying population sizes — in general they're not unbiased.

Name: Gordon Read

Address: 297 Noland Drive, Hamilton, MT 59840

Date: May 6, 2010